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Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

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The 1990s – 2000s:
Combined legacies of the recent history
of the Left for today

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The Platypus Review

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www.platypus1917.org

EBD: Again, I don't really want to say what #Occupy is, but I do think #Occupy will at some point figure out its resistance vis-à-vis capitalism. The slogan, "We are the 99 percent," they are the 1 percent," obviously has had a major resonance: It's a great rallying cry. The concern is that the movement doesn't recognize that there are more than two classes, or, that class is a bit different from how much money you have or make, but that it has to do with the relationship to the means of production and it has to do with access to power. There is a coordinator class, a class that has tremendous power that doesn't necessarily make as much money or have as much wealth as the 1 percent. There are shadows of this class inside #Occupy. We know there are different levels of privilege. We know that looking at 99 percent as a monolith and not talking about race, gender, or the different gradations of privilege within a movement is going to be the biggest enemy of #Occupy—it can't just be the 99 percent versus the 1 percent.

EVD: I don't think at this point that #Occupy could be an anti-capitalist movement. We might agree that the majority of the movement subscribes to anti-capitalism, whatever that might mean, but #Occupy doesn't include any processes for developing that. To be opposed to a process that has the potential to overcome capitalism, which I think is possible through socialism. And people advocate different kinds of anti-capitalism, but many don't exist on a global scale or don't have an anti-capitalist worldview which includes a planned economy aimed at the overcoming of the tyranny of the market, the kind of determination of structure, and the exercise of production. For #OWS to be anti-capitalist in some way it needs to be contributing to such a development. It is developing consciousness in certain ways, however it is not preventing capitalism from operating.

I don't agree with the way others are theorizing classes, but I share some hesitation about the term the 99 percent. By speaking for the 99 percent the movement accepts the least common denominator, only uses a language that everyone can immediately accept, and claims to speak for people it doesn't; it thus binds itself to a demagoguery. It is not clear, for example, that the 99 percent are the same ones who would benefit from the overthrow of capitalism.

YHA: There's no way that any of us, let alone anyone in the world, can speak for #OWS as a whole, to say that the world is anti-capitalist. "[...with]nographically, I want to hold many kinds of capitalism in tension. There are all kinds of ways to think about revolution, to think of

the future. I would not like to participate in meetings for hours on end unless there's something important being settled. I don't think a lot of people have the time to do that. We need to allow people to participate who are not committed in that way, or who do not have the capability to be committed in that way, otherwise #OWS will become a self-selecting community. The movement needs to develop more clarity in terms of its politics. It needs to sharpen the ideas people have and understand the contradictions between different viewpoints.

JC: As one commentator notes in issue 41 of the *Play-dus Review*, there are striking similarities between the #Occupy movement and the 1999 anti-WTO protests in Seattle: Both began in the last year of Democratic presidencies, were spearheaded by anarchists, and were motivated by discontents with neo-liberalism, and were unsupported by organized labor. What, if anything, makes this movement different? How is it a departure from Seattle? What are the lessons to be learned from the defeat of the anti-globalization movement?

Brian Dominick: It is key is that, although the similarities are quite profound, the differences are where the advantages are. From about day three of #OWS, the council made direct decisions by consensus, and the aspiration for direct and open democracy, picked up exactly where the anti-globalization movement left off. There is a perfect continuity there. The difference is that with #OWS, we see a movement, with only a minimal understanding of where it was heading, taking off and expanding in ways beyond what anyone could have believed in their wildest imagination.

EVD: Much of the continuity with the WTO council protests is in the focus on the intolerable world economy, and in that the registered discontent should be found in as broad a group as possible as a means to affect social change. But in order to change things, which ought to be our objective, we need to work through actual means of leveraging structural power in this society, which fundamentally comes down to class power; we should be looking to the working class.

JC: Some have characterized the #Occupy movement as sounding the tocsin for class war. Others recognize the fact of dramatic inequality, and want the #Occupy movement to spearhead a set of economic reforms. Others see #Occupy as transforming something beyond the confines of the economic. These perspectives point to radically different directions for this movement. Would you characterize this movement as "anti-capitalist"? Should it be? And, if so, what is the nature of these "anti-capitalist" politics? In what way does the #Occupy movement affirm or reject the political ideas of anti-capitalist movements before it?

Nathan Schneider: My anecdotal demography sug-

Hannah Appel: First of all, I disagree with the idea that the capitalist system of #OWS which has enabled anarchists, Marxists, and liberals, is only a temporary strength and will be eclipsed by a need for a narrowing of ideology. Liberty Square was fundamentally a place of experimentation. David Graeber and others have referred to this kind of experimentation as "prefigurative politics." What does it mean to make something new in the shell of the old? What does it mean to provide free school, "free food, and free education?" Another question about "free two" is what will post-park places of experiment look like?

#Occuppy, narrowly conceived as the occupation of space, is not over in Phase Two, but we also want to think about prefigurative politics, not as they are narrowly related to space, but as they are related to the imagination. How do we begin in Phase Two to think about the intersection of capitalism and racism? What would popular control of the financial system look like? What would it mean if personhood were less mediated by credit scores? How do we democratize economic analysis? All of these questions that have been posed from the beginning of #Occuppy Wall Street come to the fore in Phase Two.

Eric Van Deynere: From the opposite direction, I would say that what needs to come out of this is an independent movement of the working class in this country. I don't know what specific relevance occupations will have in the future of that. Foreclosure occupations are not really occupations. Yet that is exactly the kind of economically significant intervention that this movement can make. But the occupations of public squares don't necessarily have the character of an attack on economic reproduction; they're highly symbolic. Occupations should not be regarded as the distinctive or necessarily characteristic of any future action.

Symbolically, #OWS offers people an opportunity to discuss, to develop politically, and to articulate different ideas. These are all very important, but the strategy to

Late in 2011, the *Platypus Affiliated Society* hosted a series of roundtables on the #Occupy Wall Street Movement. Speakers at the event held on December 9, 2011 at New York University included Hannah Appel (OWS Think Tank Working Group), Erik Van Deventer (NYU), Nathan Schneider (Waging Nonviolence), and Brian Dominick (Z Media Institute), with Jeremy Cohan (Platypus Affiliated Society) moderating. The original description of the roundtable reads as follows:

The recent #Occupy protests are driven by inequities with the present state of affairs: glaring economic inequality, dead-end Democratic Party politics, and, for some, the suspicion that capitalism could never produce an equitable society. These concerns are coupled with aspirations for social transformation at an international level. For many, the protests at Wall Street and elsewhere provide an avenue to raise questions the Left has long fallen silent on: What would it mean to challenge capitalism on a global scale? How could we begin to overcome social conditions that adversely affect every part of life? And, how could a new international radical movement address these concerns in practice?

What follows is an edited transcript of the event. A complete video is available online at <<http://vimeo.com/33584635>>.

Jeremy Cohan: Though in question, it seems as though #OWS is here to stay, with its capacious symbolism—"We are the 99 percent." Is it fair to say that the #Occupy movement has entered into a "Phase Two"? If so, what is the nature of this new phase of the movement's development? To expand: How has the occupation been forced to adapt to a changing set of conditions on the ground? What sorts of fresh difficulties do these new conditions pose for the occupiers? A moment of crisis can often be a moment of opportunity. What direc-

Hannah Appel, Eric Van Deventer, Brian Dominick, Nathan Schneider, and Jeremy Cohan

What is the #Occupy movement? A roundtable discussion



#Occupy, continued from page 1



Protesters occupy the grounds of St. Paul's in London, autumn of last year. Their encampment has since been removed.

capitalism as a theoretical and historical concept, but there is also capitalism in particular since the beginning of the neoliberal era. It's very important to understand the specificity of capitalism in the last several decades, and that capitalism now is very different from before.

If right now we could do meaningful campaign finance reform, fight for the separation of corporation and state, that would revolutionize the way we've been living in capitalism. However, it would not revolutionize it the way socialists want it to be revolutionized. One of the scary things about revolution is that it seems so big, so far away, and certain orientations make it seem unattainable. I think one of the things #OWS is doing is opening up what the revolutionary imagination could be and asking what revolution would be like. What do small forms of revolution look like that don't necessarily allow capitalism to stage its own death just to be reborn afterward in a stronger way?

One division that emerged early on among the occupants concerned the need to call for demands. Some took issue with the content of the demands, arguing that if these are to be truly "representative of the 99 percent" they cannot assume a radical stance that would alienate a large section of the population. Others worry that demands focused on electoral reform or policy would steer the movement in a conservative direction. Some call into the question the call for demands in the first place, as these would limit, even undermine, the open-ended potential for transformation present in the #Occupy movement and could only close revolutionary possibilities.

JC: What, if any, demands do you think this movement should be calling for? And, more importantly, what kind of social transformation would you like to see this movement give rise to?

BD: Everyone reacted when the media asked about demands and everyone said we don't know what our demands are yet, or that we don't want to make demands. Movements typically start in one of two ways. They start with objectives and demands, which might come with legislation proposals that are fairly specific, or they demand rights that are not necessarily specific but concrete and understood. Those kind of movements pick up speed very quickly, get a lot of people involved, and it's easy to articulate what the goal is, and they often achieve a lot. The other kind start with objectives that are fairly complex, which have more to do with structural change in the defining institutions of society. These movements are much harder to get started, they're much harder to get people involved in, and they don't catch fire very quickly.

#Occupy is strange. It is a movement on fire from day one and it's not clear which of the types of movements it is, because the objectives aren't defined yet. Well, #Occupy is at that stage where participation is there, and the greatest advantage is that the objectives aren't known. What #Occupy is right now is an active group of people just starting to form objectives and tactics that are not just symbolic, but can create ways where you can start evaluating progress.

EVD: Demands are viewed differently by those in favor of them and those critical of them. The #Occupy movement makes demands all the time, as do all movements. The #Occupy movement demands an end to police brutality, which is what the Oakland port blockade was about. When the people were kicked out of the park, there was a motion put in to invalidate that order. There was a demand on the courts that the people should have the right to occupy the parks. When homes are given back to the people who have resided in them, that is a demand: The people have the right to continue to occupy their homes regardless of what foreclosure proceedings happened. Demands are a way that the movement communicates what it wants and it doesn't have anything to do with asking power whether it concedes something. It expresses an intent to do something and in this way it overlaps with what you're probably talking about in terms of objectives, but many of the people who are in support of demands don't at all see it as a request.

If the #OWS movement starts issuing demands about particular bills in congress which are supported by Democratic legislators, it will be very easy for these politicians to co-opt the movement. But the absence of demands also raises the possibility that the movement will be co-opted. If we really don't want the movement to be co-opted, which I think is of paramount importance, it is important to issue demands that will sharply differentiate the movement from the Democratic Party or the labor bureaucracy.

HA: Is #Occupy about systemic change? I obviously do not speak for the #Occupy movement, but it would be my hope that #Occupy is and will be about systemic change. Exactly how that will come to be articulated is, I think, a question of process.

NS: A lot of what this movement has done is produce a radicalizing experience. People come to the occupations and you don't hear anything about either Sarah Palin or Obama, they talk about their needs and hopes for their lives and families. There was a lot of value in not bringing the movement's message or orientation towards government and instead focusing the orientation on the movement itself.

In terms of demands, the documents produced by the consensus process of the general assembly are important to consider. The first document was "Principles of Solidarity," a document about what we stand together for as a community. The second one was a declaration, which was a call for occupations around the country and around the world. Again, they're not addressing government. It's saying government isn't what matters first of all. All these documents complained about things in government and the banks and so forth, but they addressed the people, assuming one another as the audience for this movement.

JC: What would it mean for #Occupy to succeed and can it?

EVD: Well, it hasn't defined any conditions for success so it can't really be evaluated to see if it has succeeded. It has succeeded in politicizing many thousands of people. It hasn't disrupted Wall Street to any great degree. It hasn't disrupted capitalism. It has disrupted the Port of Oakland and it may do so again. It's successful on those grounds, but in regards to the success of the movement, it needs to decide on the various visions of what it should do and evaluate success based on those things.

BD: I would like to see #Occupy continue to bring different people out of the various woodworks. #Occupy has accomplished a tremendous amount just by reminding us that there is energy. I don't think that major reforms are right around the corner but I do think the energy is there and the energy is the main ingredient of the first major step to make change.

NS: I think that this movement—and I do think movement is a fair term—is predicated on having watched other movements across the world change things and exercise the power of people in large numbers against the power of interests that are far too comfortable and far too powerful. What needs to happen for this movement to fulfill the hope that made it possible in the first place, that made these kids feel it was worth getting beaten up by the police, and what needs to happen if we want people take notice, is to follow through in bringing about serious positive change in the structure of power.

HA: For 13 weeks #Occupy has succeeded, but that's not to idealize it. There's really difficult stuff that we all continue to deal with. To the extent that we're all marginally sympathetic, I consider us all occupiers. When I say we, I'm not referring to some magical group I'm a part of and you are not—I'm referring to all of us who consider ourselves marginally sympathetic and critical. One of the key goals of the Platypus Affiliated Society has been the openness to criticism and even antagonism in the process of politics and I think #OWS is really bringing that to the fore for a lot of people.

And now going forward, I think that #Occupy will succeed if it recognizes that what we are dealing with is fundamentally global. This is a global movement and I think there is growing understanding of that within #Occupy. We've had visitors not only from the Indignados and others, but also there is a tremendous ongoing dialogue between Egypt and here.

Q & A

It's interesting how emotional moments of interaction between the protestors and the police really energize the movement and bring many people into it. How do you think this tension will define or figure in the future of #Occupy Phase Two?

BD: I write extensively on this issue of police interaction with the protestors. A lot of people come out and say it's an injustice. It also has the effect of waking up those who are privileged and don't realize cops will beat you for any reason, as a large portion of society already understands. But the clashes with the police are a major distraction.

As a street medic during the anti-globalization movement, I was out there doing street medic work and constantly observing, watching, and dealing with the results of police interaction with activists. I strongly caution people from considering that interaction with police fuels a movement. I also caution people from thinking that police reaction to you has anything to do with the level of success. Police and mayors do not react to movements because they are threats to elites. It's possible they do, but not necessarily. I'm not a fan of the police and I'm not a fan of the idea that they are our interface

with elites. I'm also not a fan of the idea that police are part of the 99 percent. I don't know where they fit in, but they're not going to come around anytime soon, they're institutionally opposed to what we're doing because of their allegiances with the 1 percent, yet it doesn't mean that any relations we have with them are conveying a response from the 1 percent except that they are the first line of defense.

On the question of models of social transformation: One of the popular tropes that emerged during the two months spent occupying Liberty Plaza is that many of the participants were working together to build a small-scale model of what the future might look like. These occupants were looking to create a vision of the sort of society, in miniature, in which they want to live. Some radical thinkers of the past, by which I mean Marx, criticized this tactic of social change. Such authors have put forth the criticism that to build these castles in the air, utopians are compelled to appeal to the philanthropy of the bourgeois heart and purse. Applying this criticism to #Occupy Wall Street, doesn't one have to concede that most of the services provided at Liberty Plaza were still dependent upon donations which came from the society of exchange? If the means for the provision of these services are in at least some sense parasitic, does this in any way compromise the legitimacy of such allegedly prefigurative communities?

NS: There is truth to that, the extent to which the general assemblies have a pretty hard time figuring out what to do with the half a million dollars or more which has come in. A lot of the people from within are really concerned about this and hope that, insofar as this is a prefigurative society, it isn't really that dependent on donations.

HA: I agree wholeheartedly with that critique, and I also agree with what #Occupy is doing. I do not think those are mutually exclusive. I actually love Marx, but I think, historically, the biggest danger of certain kinds of Marxist politics is that they understand Marx in a certain way to the exclusion and detriment of every other possible strategy. They think that any strategy which isn't exactly aligned with an originalist interpretation of Marx—and I use that word intentionally—only looks like it is destabilizing capitalism when it is not. I don't think it is necessarily clear what it would look like to get to something like a Marxist revolution.

Whether foreclosure action is wonderful or it is only a gesture, private property is one of the cornerstones of capitalism. Putting people back in their homes is saying people should be able to own the homes instead of the banks. I'm not saying this is a radical critique of private property. But at the same time, the banks own those homes. Those people are effectively squatting those homes. There are more radical critiques of capitalism accidentally occurring in the #Occupy movement than might appear to an originalist Marxist.

EVD: These actions are often ethically admirable. It's very positive that people are spending their time in this way, but it can be a distraction that diverts energy from political organizing. We should be aiming for a society in which the provision of goods and services is socialized at the highest standard, in the most sufficient way, which is something that individuals can't do, and can't voluntarily organize in small groups to do, which means that you need to seize the means of production. This means you need the capacity of corporations, but organized in a different manner, in order to organize society

political action. If at a certain point, on a grand scale, we are able to seize the means of production, that would be thrilling, but first what it means is a certain form of politicization—a certain form of political discussion that is inchoate. What I'm saying is that the means to mass mobilization aren't already known, but I think from participation we mobilize something a Marxist might call the working class.

BD: I do think there's a bit of a false dichotomy between these two ideas. The idea that this is a microcosmic prefiguration of society on a farm or in a park somewhere—that's a straw man, something that people can decide to exercise as part of their activism, which is what #Occupy Wall Street did. The idea of the human mic, an interesting thing to watch for the people involved, is very empowering and it drew a lot of people in, versus the idea that we need to seize the means of production, that we need to take over the power of politics—I think that's also, in a way, a straw man, or at least a bad idea.

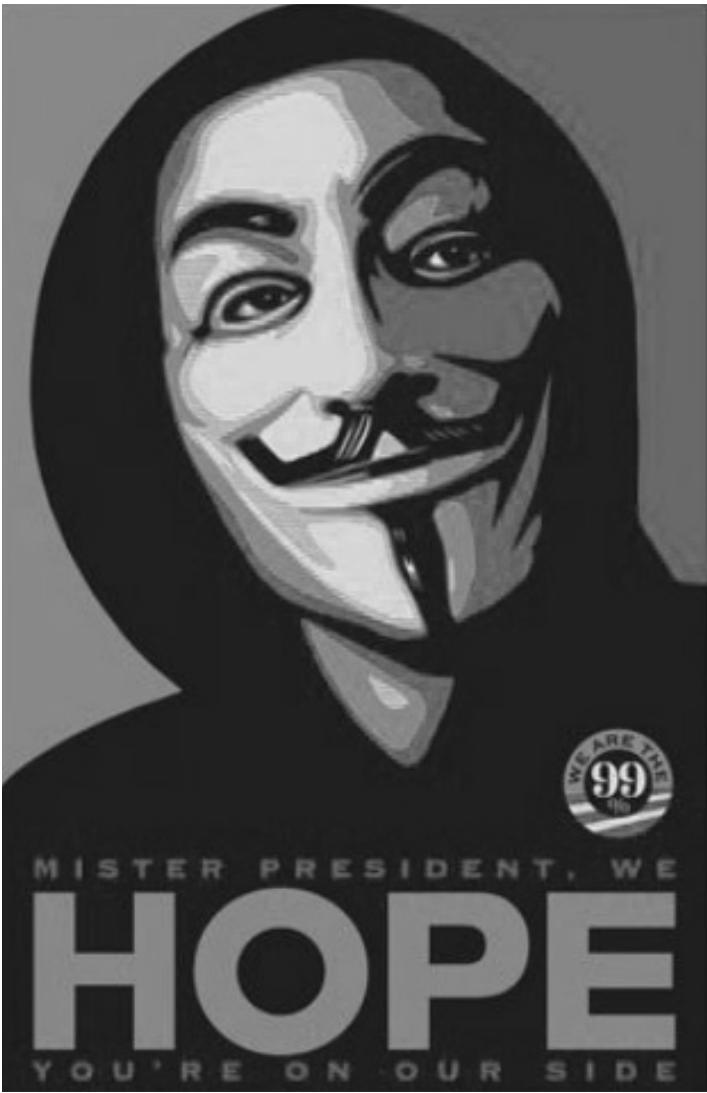
The idea is that we can go into communities, build institutions, be engaged, participate in democracy on a small scale and build upward from the ground and challenge the top all at once, and that we do not need a vanguard to swoop in, take over the White House, and nationalize the means of production. We can seize the means of production on a small scale. We can build small institutions. I think we get dichotomized and that nobody here is advocating any of these things, except that we need to be engaged now, not waiting and just having discussions hoping we have that power someday down the road. We take it now where we can and look to take it down the road where we can.

On the double-edged sword of the openness of #Occupy: On the one hand, the whole advocacy for keeping it open is that the labor bureaucrats thus cannot co-opt us, but, on the other hand, this openness is a way for the labor bureaucrats to stand for all this stuff they have no right to claim for themselves.

HA: That is an excellent point—that is a way that the lack of demands or lack of a clear ideology allows certain kinds of depoliticization. It allows the luster of looking like you're allied with #Occupy Wall Street but doesn't ask you to follow through. However, I think there's a certain form of leverage there. The union president has come out publicly and said, "I'm with #Occupy Wall Street," and you say, "Okay, here's the plan."

To follow up on the question about what would it mean for a movement to succeed, I was wondering about the flipside of the coin. What would it look like if it were to fail? Not just in the most general terms of dismantling or fizzling out without having achieved social transformation, nor in terms of co-optation, which has been raised. What obstacles and dangers does the #Occupy movement face strategically, politically, and organizationally?

BD: The failure of the movement would mean it has failed to evolve. There are stages and we've said that we don't know what success would look like. But what failure would look like, I think, is to fail to continually take those steps in evolving to the next stages. We're kind of at square one. Most movements make it to square one at some point. This movement has a really early and solid step on square one and has time to evaluate that and move forward, and not making it to square two would not exactly be something disgraceful but would be, as it goes, failing to evolve.



Shepard Fairey's #Occupy poster, based on his earlier Obama "Hope" image, proved controversial within the movement he sought to advertise.

differently. In finance there's already socialization of capital on the highest level and you would need to take charge of it on the highest level. There's no in-between step—you could provide loans to people, but that doesn't do anything about the power of finance as it exists. I think prefiguration is fine, but I'm not sure there's any way that you can see it as a bubble sort of merging into a larger sub-society, which will then be resistant to capitalism—I think capitalism would be able to overcome any such "bubble."

HA: I understand and am sympathetic to that argument, but without either romanticizing or abstracting something called a working class, it doesn't at all "distract" from political organizing. It *is* political organizing. We've mobilized more so-called working class people—that's a category I'm not comfortable with—in the context of

EVD: The problem that faces #OWS is in many ways the same problem which has faced social movements in the U.S. for the past hundred years or so, which is that they get co-opted to one of the mainstream democratic parties, specifically the Democrats. If #OWS failed to take this opportunity to make clear its differences and divorce its constituencies from their historic support of the Democratic party, that would be a failure. If in 2012, a substantial fraction moved towards campaigning for the democrats and if others do not succeed in making very clear what is wrong with that, it will be a failure. In terms of the evolution, there may be evolutions in the framework of #OWS. If not, there will surely be other movements. There are important things that have to happen very soon. There has to be great growth of this kind of movement, but also a clarification. | **P**

Anderson, continued from page 2

prejudices and opinions are swept away. All that is solid melts into air and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.” Here he seems to be celebrating the fact of capitalism’s having swept the past away and given rise to the possibility of its own self-overcoming, the possibility of mankind’s confrontation with our circumstances with, as he puts it, “sober senses.” Capitalism in this sense only makes possible the conclusion of pre-history through deliberate action to achieve a post-capitalist society. In this sense, when Marx terms capitalism “civilization,” it can be viewed as having a doubled charge as both the overcoming and the perfection of the past. Do you think that Marx’s attitude about that ever changes?

KA: Even in the *Communist Manifesto*, where his praise is at the highest, in those paragraphs you were quoting, there is the phrase, “the icy waters of individual calculation,” which I don’t think he means as a compliment to capitalism and its culture.

SL: No? Don’t we sometimes splash cold water on our faces in order to wake ourselves up?

KA: The point I am trying to make is that even in that language about progressivism, it’s always dialectical. Part of the way the *Manifesto* is set up is that the first few pages set out this model that the subsequent pages undermine by talking about all the contradictions and oppressions brought about by capital, such as making the worker a mere instrument or machine, the recessions and depressions that capitalism creates, the fact that the capitalist class is unfit to rule because it can’t guarantee to the subordinate population, the proletariat, even the minimal level of existence, etc. As you were saying, there is the very clear implication that you have to go through this process. But in the later writings, that is less clear. The most dramatic example is the late writings on Russia, where the Russian villages are still overwhelmingly rural but are starting to be encroached upon by capitalist property relations and capitalist banking. You can see on the horizon the glimmers of what was to become the beginning of the industrialization of Russia in the 1890s, which Marx did not live to see. Still Marx does suggest that if the villages resist the encroachment of capitalism, this might be a good thing. He talks about the communal structure of the Russian villages and the collectivist social forms they take, even more so than in the medieval European village, let alone modern capitalist social relations. He sees in this a possible building block for a modern communism. And there was a revolutionary movement there at the time trying to do exactly that. In dialogue with that Russian revolutionary movement, Marx is wondering whether it might not be able to link up with the proletarian revolutions of the West he is anticipating. So not everyone has to necessarily go through this painful, uprooting process of the old social relations as happens with the industrial revolution. This has wider implications. And there are other examples one can point to in the later writings, the writings from 1881 and 1882, just before his death.

SL: In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel says,

Without rhetorical exaggeration, a simply truthful combination of the miseries that have overwhelmed the noblest of nations and polities and the finest examples of private virtue forms a picture of the most fearful aspect and excites emotions of the profoundest and most hopeless sadness, counterbalanced by no consolatory result. We endure in beholding it a mental torture, allowing no defense or escape but the consideration that what has happened could not be otherwise, that it is a fatality which no intervention could alter. And at last we draw back from the intolerable disgust with which these sorrowful reflections threaten us into the more agreeable environment of our private individual life—the present formed by our aims and interests. In short, we retreat into selfishness that stands on the quiet shore and thus enjoys the safety of the distant spectacle of “wrecks confusedly hurled.” But even regarding history as the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of people, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized, the question involuntarily arises: To what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered? From this point, the investigation [of History] proceeds...¹

It seems to me that Marx inherits this very profoundly, for instance, in the statement, “all hitherto existing history has been the history of class struggle.” But it also seems to me that Marx’s theory of capital reconfigures that concern somewhat. In particular, it raises not only the question of the suffering of all of world history, which, for some at least, in one corner of the world, involved the suffering of industrial capitalism’s emergence, but also what Hegel says—that, in some uncon- soling and inconsolable way, this is just a historical fact, albeit a deeply melancholy one. In the face of which Marx asks, What about when this suffering is no longer necessary? What about the post-1848 world? That is, in some ways it is the failure of the Revolution of 1848, the failure of the working class and indeed humanity to rise to the historical tasks of industrial society, that is the most deeply melancholy fact (and the most fundamental object of critique) for Marx. It might be in that light that we’d look at his descriptions of the barbarities committed in India, China, or elsewhere—i.e., that these are unnecessary. They are not History, in Hegel’s sense.

KA: Marx is a child of Hegel in that respect. On the language about fatality, I would say that Hegel is also the philosopher of the human subject. He is interested in the quest for freedom, for self-determination. This operates within a larger framework that adds up to a historical progression, as Hegel sees it. But, of course, even with Hegel progress is never one sided. He has room for retrogression within his concept of historical development. For example, he regards the entire European medieval period as one of retrogression. So neither Hegel nor Marx are the uncritical progressivists they are often portrayed as being.

But there are some differences with Hegel. Some of Marx’s descriptions of the Indian village and Indian civi-

lization as backward, unchanging, unresisting, and pas- sive, as not really having a history, are practically copied from Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*. But what I think held Marx back from being fully Hegelian, although that is certainly his major intellectual influence, is, as every- one points out, that Marx is a more empirical thinker. Marx is interested in looking at historical and social phenomena more closely than Hegel, although Hegel did do quite a bit of that too. Also, Marx is a humanist. That is the big difference. There is an implicit human- ism in some of Hegel’s writings on the human subject, but in Marx’s 1844 critique of Hegel, he zeroes in on the abstraction of Hegel’s philosophizing where the real breathing human being, the corporeal, bodily being, is



Scene from the Indian Mutiny of 1857, depicted in a steel engraving from the 1860s. Marx addressed the Mutiny in a series of articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*.

not really present or is insufficiently present in Hegel’s thinking. Marx is more reluctant than Hegel to think in terms of fatal laws of history, especially by the end of his life. In a response to Nikolai Mikhailovsky, a Russian who was trying to defend Marx by saying that he had a general theory of history, Marx replied that he did not have a concept of historical development that is inevita- bly or fatally imposed on all peoples. He is a little less global, as a thinker, in that sense, than Hegel, a little less totalizing, although it is a real caricature to paint Hegel as a thinker of totality without room for particu- larity. Because Hegel spent a lot of time attacking what he called the “abstract universal.”

SL: It seems to me that Marx is deeply beholden to Hegel on the question of the project of the self-con- scious constitution of history. Of course, that project is radically reconfigured by Marx through his understand- ing of commodity fetishism and what consciousness means in the struggle to realize and overcome civil soci- ety in the age of capital. Like Hegel, the question is one of humanity’s becoming self-conscious. It is not just a question of fatality, but of reason’s cunning. In the mod- ern world, as Hegel says, “everyone is free.” There is the question of the free constitution of history that Marx inherits. What you’re calling Marx’s pessimism or his increasingly harsh and unrelenting critique of capital for me turns on the question of struggling with a social form whose potential for emancipation is bound up with its seeming recalcitrance to that project. Of course, post-1848 Marx thinks that the new tasks of the revolu- tion have been announced yet humanity is not taking them up. The way I read the writings on the barbarity of British suppression of the Indian Mutiny is that Marx is arguing that, to the extent that modern society falls be- low the threshold of its own possibility, it renounces its title to supersede feudalism. It is not really a question of support for the Indian Mutiny, but of the melancholy recognition of a kind of civilized barbarism. But, once again, there are strong echoes here of Adam Smith’s earlier critique of the East India Company, to name only the most obvious instance.

KA: There is a lot packed into your comment. In the famous letter to Engels of 1858 where Marx talks about having reread Hegel’s *Logic* as he is reconstruct- ing some of the categories that were to become the *Gundrisse* and later *Capital*, he says that the *Logic* was a great help to him in working through the economic categories. That’s the same letter where he says that the Indians are now “our best allies.” So, I do take that as support for the Indian Sepoy Uprising of 1857. The question is, What does support mean? It does not mean that he is supporting the political aims of the uprising, which, to the extent that they were coordinated, called for the restoration of the Mogul Empire. Certainly he doesn’t support that. My take on it is that it is very dif- ferent.

In regard to Ireland, for instance, Marx always sup- ports the Irish national movement, but the degree to which he is critical of it has to do with the social content of the movement and its leadership. In the 1840s, it was led by pro-landlord groups close to the Catholic Church. Marx and Engels are scathing of these tendencies. By the 1860s, there is the Fenian movement, which is more peasant based, less tied to the Church, and against property holdings not only of the British but also of the so-called Irish landowner classes. Similarly, the Indian movement did not have a socially progressive agenda in the Revolt of 1857. So Marx supports it, but not with the fulsome- ness with which he supports the movement in Ireland later on. Marx is a supporter of national self-de- termination, but not as an abstract universal. The most glaring example of how he doesn’t support all claims to national self-determination is the southern U.S. Confed- eracy. He does not support their right to national self- determination because the political and social basis on which that was constructed was the defense of slavery.

SL: Let me ask you about the discussion in the book about Marx’s idea of modes of production. You specify what you mean by the “unilinear” model which Marx is breaking with by noting that this took the form of a purportedly universal philosophy of history, one that “focused on Western development from early stateless clan societies to the ancient Greco-Roman class societies based on slave labor to the feudalism of the Middle Ages

and on to bourgeois society and its successor, social- ism.”² As you point out, for all of their empirical variety, all pre-capitalist societies share, for Marx, the crucial theoretical aspect of being pre-capitalist. As you put it at one point, “the purpose of their labor was ‘not the cre- ation of value.’”³ So, it seems there is a tension between making a claim about all of human history and making a claim about the specificity of capital. We would not want to let go of that tension, would we?

KA: I am not sure of the extent to which Marx saw the Asiatic mode of production as a core concept ground- ing his discussions of India, China, etc. I have not really thought that through, but certainly the Asiatic mode of

production is not something on which he expended a lot of intellectual effort. There is the long section in the *Grundrisse* on pre-capitalist modes of production that talks about the Greco-Roman mode of production and the ancient Asiatic mode of production. There he is re- ally talking about India, as far as I can tell. But beyond that, Marx wrote a lot journalistically about India, and the phrase “Asiatic mode of production” does not, to my knowledge, occur in those writings. I also used to think that there must have been a long essay somewhere by Marx describing the feudal mode of production. But there isn’t. It’s just a few scattered comments here and there, as far as I can tell. Marx is not Max Weber. Weber was a scholar who spent perhaps most of his intellectual effort on trying to figure out the uniqueness of modern Western capitalism vis-à-vis earlier social forms. He wrote voluminously on China, India, ancient Judaism, ancient Greece and Rome, and the European

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Middle Ages. With Marx, the concerns are very different. He does look at these kinds of issues sometimes, but he always does so with contemporary concerns in mind, not only about the structure of capitalism, but also to figure out the problems of resistance to and revolution against capital. Thus, Marx’s interest at the end of his life in the Russian and Indian villages develops because he thinks that these were possible sites of resistance to capital that could become allies of the Western proletariat. To the extent that he is concerned with the non-West or the non-core capitalist countries like Ire- land in his own time, it is because of their relationship to the problematic of capital and labor inside the core countries. Sometimes he thinks these relationships can reverse themselves. Accordingly, in the late 1860s, Marx feels that an Irish revolution could become the lever that might spark proletarian uprising inside Britain. Similar- ly, he argues that the Russian communal village could be the starting point for a global communist develop- ment if it could link up with the proletariat in the West. These are not isolated questions for Marx. Certainly he never addresses Ireland, India, Russia, or anyplace else for the sake of elaborating a philosophy of history. There may be a very interesting philosophy of history there, but that would have to be teased out.

SL: To return to a point I made earlier, my mistrust of the preoccupation with Eurocentrism is that it occludes the fact that revolution was, according to Marx, pos- sible in his own time. This raised the question of how the transition to post-capitalist society would take place globally. For many who throw around the category of “Eurocentrism,” revolution to them was no more pos- sible then than it is now, and they’re not interested in either case.

KA: For most academic thinking, even left-wing aca- demic thinking, revolution is probably not possible. Even a school of thinking for which I have great respect, the Frankfurt School, devoted most of its energy to figur- ing out why the German working class, and later on the modern American working class in America, were not even really oppositional. In Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* this is a major theme. This goes with the territory of academic radicalism. But Marx was not an academic, and *Capital* was not written for an academic audience. | **P**

1. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. The quoted pas- sage appears in part III, “Philosophic History,” section 24. The text is available online at <<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/history3.htm>>.
2. Kevin B. Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Eth- nicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 155–56.
3. *Grundrisse*, quoted in *Ibid.*, 156.

Third Parties and the Left: Problems and Prospects

Nikil Saval	n+1
Margaret Flowers	Physicians for a National Health Program, Occupy DC
Lenny Brody	Justice Party National Steering Committee
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Jason Wright	International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT)

The Environmentalism of Occupy

Andony Melathopoulos	Platypus Affiliated Society
Nicholas Mirzoeff	NYU, Media, Culture and Communication
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Marx at the margins

An interview with Kevin Anderson

Spencer A. Leonard

Last summer, Spencer A. Leonard interviewed Kevin Anderson, author of Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism (1995) and Marx at the Margins (2010). The interview was broadcast on August 2, 2011 on the radio show Radical Minds on WHPK–FM Chicago. What follows is an edited transcript of their conversation.

Spencer Leonard: Broadly describe your aims and ambitions in writing *Marx at the Margins*.

Kevin Anderson: One aim was that, in the past couple of decades—really the past three decades since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*—there have been a number of critiques of Marx that centered on charges of Eurocentrism, ethnocentrism, and so forth. I wanted to respond to those, but also to look at Marx anew in light of them. Moreover, while there are various works on Marx and European nationalisms, on India and China, and the late writings on Russia, no one had covered the whole of these, including Marx’s writing on the Civil War in the United States, which deal directly with ethnicity. So my second aim was to address all these together in a single study with the other, more well-known writings. This also required taking account of newly surfaced writings of Marx slated to appear in the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*.

SL: Regarding the Eurocentrism charge, it is raised not only to criticize Marx, but also to reject the Enlightenment tradition in which all critical theory finds its roots. Yet, rather than dismissing the charge as an expression of third world nationalism, your book takes it seriously—arguing that indeed Marx and Engels are not wholly immune from criticism on these grounds. You point to the “unilinearity” of their early writings, above all the *Communist Manifesto* and the *New York Tribune* writings of the early 1850s. But is the category of “the West” really relevant for Marx or for the radical Enlightenment out of which he emerges?

KA: Certainly there are places where that is the case. In some of the 1853 writings on India, for instance, Marx speaks of England as a superior civilization, which by

virtue of its higher economic form is going to revolutionize India. Also, as late as the preface to *Capital*, Marx says that more developed countries show the less developed the image of their own future. These examples suggest almost, if one wanted to think of it in terms of a railroad train, that the Western European countries and North America are kind of in the front couple cars of the train and that Asia and the so-called “third world” are in the rear being pulled forward into modernity.

SL: So that all countries would in a sense recapitulate the historical trajectory of those at the head of the train.

KA: Right! Of course, stated so simplistically, no one supports such a view. No one would say that India is going to become an exact copy of England. But to the extent that one would say that a country like Britain represents the future of humanity, one is adopting a Eurocentric model. Of course, there are also problems with the critique of Eurocentrism, which is often very critical of the social structures and social institutions of modern Western societies and far less so of the social structures and institutions of the non-West. Marx in examining “non-Western” societies is always critical. And as his thought matures, these criticisms cease to rely upon a Eurocentric unilinearity and move toward a more multilinear perspective. However, Marx is no primitivist anarchist interested in returning to a clan-based, low-tech society. Nor does he idealize the social formations in places like India, with their caste and other hierarchies, their subordination of women, etc. He does not sugar-coat any of that. Nonetheless, towards the end of his life, there is evidence that he entertains more of a possibility of societies evolving and revolutionizing themselves more on the basis of indigenous institutions. This is never entirely so, but he gives more consideration to the internally generated institutions of these societies.

SL: It seems to me that when Marx says England represents a higher civilization, he is not really talking about the “Englishness” of England, much less anything “authentically Western.” Capitalism for Marx is not a *superior* civilization. Rather, capitalist society is “civilization,”

per se, in a way that the past can only be said to be by analogy with it. Thus, in the *Communist Manifesto*, he uses the language of “civilization,” and terms everything else barbaric, as for instance in the passage where he talks about the beating down of Chinese walls by British imports. The issue is the universality of the form realizing itself at the level of world history. So, it seems that when he is using that language, he is talking about a social form, one that just happens to have emerged in Europe.

KA: Well of course there is some truth in that, but as I also say in the book, the language sometimes verges on what today we would consider ethnocentric—the descriptions of India as an unchanging, unresisting society that has no history except that which is imposed on it by its foreign conquerors, and so on. There are some problems there. Another example would be an early text in which Engels applauds the U.S. war with Mexico, the conquest of California, and the incorporation into the United States of the Southwest, referring to “the lazy Mexicans” who were unable to develop the region in the way the North Americans are going to do. That kind of language reverses by the 1860s and 1870s. You can see a real turn there. Also in writings by Engels but also on occasion by Marx, there is the claim that the Czech and the Serb peoples (to name only a few) are barbaric, so it is good that in some areas they are dominated by the Germans, who represent a higher civilization. These nations are destined to disappear, and this is a good thing. Again, there are exceptions to this even in the early writings. And whenever they are actually in contact with real historical movements of resistance that are at all progressive, they change their tune fairly quickly. The clearest example of this is Ireland. Nothing in their writings suggests any sympathy for any “progress” that Britain is bringing to Ireland. Engels especially was intimately involved with Ireland as early as his 1845 work *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. There Engels devotes a lot of attention to the Irish sub-proletariat in Manchester and to its special oppression. Marx too supports the Irish national movement, though at first his support is not for independence but for greater rights within the empire.

SL: Marx and Engels seem to me to inherit a situation from an earlier period that is utterly unfamiliar to us. They lived in a time before the whole world was bourgeois, and it seems to me that part of the struggle of not just Marx and Engels but also Hegel, Kant, Adam Smith, and Rousseau, is to critically apprehend the specificity of modernity, one that can be apprehended both temporally and ethno-geographically. This to me is what lies at the core of the early modern debate between the ancients and the moderns—major European intellectuals of freedom and emancipation are confronted with the fact that their society is expanding and that no other society seems genuinely capable of resisting it. Hegel thus says that the North American Indians fall at the mere breath of Europe, echoing Rousseau’s comments

Occupy everything...and?

Reflections on the problems and possibilities of a movement

David Bush

MY INITIAL REACTION to the occupation of Wall Street was generally positive. But soon that feeling gave way to doubt and unease. I still find much hope in so many people taking to the streets, but I have become less certain of what, exactly, is going on. From Naomi Klein and Michael Moore to Chris Hedges, David Graeber, and Slavoj Žižek—and even Kanye West—every lefty public intellectual and several celebrities have come out in support of Occupy Wall Street and its progenitors.¹ There seems to be a left cheerleading section that has developed around Occupy, which makes me wonder why I still have doubts. Am I some sort of political dinosaur who simply doesn’t get it? Can I not see revolution when it is thrust into my face(book)? Or is the Occupy Everywhere movement (OE, henceforth) itself ambiguous in ways that raise legitimate doubts?

Here is the conundrum right off-the-bat: One of the key ideas driving OE is that democracy, as practiced today, is corrupt, cynical, and alienating. We need *true* democracy. Democracy has failed us—we need more of it! On some level I agree; however, by positioning democracy, no matter how radically perceived, as the way forward, one might foreclose radical alternatives. The language of democracy offers a mechanism for lots of people to understand and be drawn into struggle, yet it also provides limits and dangers. It is quite possible that the fetishizing of democracy could lead OE down the path of democratic renewal that seeks to fix our broken system through the broken means provided within that system.

While I have been inspired by elements of the New York General Assembly, I wonder, when we engage in the General Assembly model without doing the hard work of building political solidarity first, whom does the assembly really speak for? And who has the opportunity and privilege to have their voices heard? During most of my organizing life I have been part of groups that have used consensus. It has often worked well, and often failed, too. I prefer to work with consensus models because they build trust and dialogue, but they have limits. Firstly, consensus really only works if group members share certain core values. It only works well in small groups. When you have hundreds or thousands of people, consensus will always be broken; informal hierarchies will arise as certain people dominate the discussion, typically those who already have power and privilege. In large group meetings, the facilitator tends

to have far too much power, in particular, and with almost no accountability.²

The persistence of informal hierarchies within the General Assemblies points to deeper problems of privilege. The idea that we can call mass meetings and begin to fight back against neoliberalism using mass consensus without addressing the serious issues of power and privilege in ourselves is a fantasy. The very call to occupy already occupied land is a case in point. People in the OE movement have reflected on this “problematic use of language,” which is a start, but to frame this as if it were only a matter of semantics is in itself problematic. Colonialism and the denial of indigenous sovereignty is not merely tangential to capitalism, but at its very core. Accumulation by dispossession is not a historical process that allowed capitalism to flourish once upon a time; it is a pivotal, ongoing mechanism of capitalist expansion.³ From my perspective, the mantra “We are the 99 percent” represents an ideal to which we aspire. But, in the meantime, one does wonder whether we are capable of forming a “we”—or if we even deserve to do so. We are not all the same, after all. We do not all suffer equally, nor are we exploited and oppressed in precisely the same ways. We don’t share the same material conditions or power and we certainly don’t all have the same goals or values, and we should not paper over the differences that exist within the movement just so that we can feel that the movement has a broader base.

In general, the OE is still grappling with how it understands itself politically. On one level, OE has actively shunned politics. It makes no definitive claim to being left or right—maybe it truly is conservative, as Chris Hedges opined.⁴ It is simply a “movement”—one that is trying to create structures of social justice as it grows. (That’s my guess, at least.) Its “99 percent” rhetoric seeks to create a broad consensus: “We are against the corporate class, against the Wall Street bankers, we are the 99 percent.” This attempt to forge broad consensus has been successful, as OE has spread throughout North America and beyond. In speaking to discontents that are as broad as possible, however, OE remains highly ambiguous in terms of what it wants. Signing an online petition, liking a Facebook page or following a twitter feed are not political acts. Capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy will not be brought down by writing a scathingly witty Tweet (or blog post). Social media

in some ways perpetuate the worst of aspects of neoliberalism by reducing politics to a consumer choice. The idea that showing up and presenting our anger and frustration will be enough to change “the system” is misguided. Protest can be a useful tool in building a movement’s capacities, but it is a means, not an end in itself. The OE may seek to change the current social and productive relations, but this requires dealing with the messy business of power.

The OE movement is registering popular discontent with the present order of things. What this discontent actually entails is very unclear. Obviously, the symbolic occupation of Wall Street has been a galvanizing force. The OE idea has tapped into a popular (and populist) sentiment. But that is not necessarily a good thing. The tradition of populism within North America was, and still is, fraught with problems. Many populist movements double down their hate of the elite and bankers with overtly anti-Semitic language, but any analysis of society that explains everything on the basis of a tiny segment of the population controlling the media and banks exhibits similar problems. While financialization of the economy is indeed problematic, it is more a symptom of the workings and development of capitalism rather than the immediate cause of the crisis. Though the members of the ruling class are hardly devoid of responsibility, capitalism itself is the problem.

When we communicate via protest, whom are we communicating to? An authority? The masses? Ourselves? We can make impossible demands to authority, we can fight for necessary reforms, we can even just register blind frustration. These may prove useful in certain circumstances but they all tacitly or explicitly rely on existing authoritative power. The questions is, how do we move from complaint and frustration to the point of asserting explicit ideas as dominant? How do we create hegemony? This problem cannot be reduced entirely to the question of the state, for power is always operating on the more fundamental level of social and productive relations. At the same time, of course, we cannot ignore the state. At some point, if OE sufficiently threatens existing power dynamics, it will be severely repressed, far worse than mass arrests. So what to do about power? What to do about the state? It may take OE a long time to reach any conclusions to these questions, if it ever does. But, for now, it is imperative that we at least have clear questions.

The broad appeal of OE’s message is its greatest strength, but perhaps also one of its greatest weaknesses. The lack of goals and demands has been defended on the basis that OE could not have spread as far nor been as accessible to many people if it presented a list of goals early on. For better and for worse, this allows “Occupy Wall Street” to mean almost whatever one wants it to mean. Even if only tacitly, OE already does espouse political positions. If the movement is to continue, it will have to become more confrontational. It will have to become more political. Diversity in movements is positive but not at the expense of clarity. Growth in numbers is exciting but can also be meaningless. For OE to eschew other considerations in favor of an ambiguous strategy of growth disturbingly mirrors the worst of neoliberal ideology.

Within the anti-globalization movement, the number of people coming out for protests became something of

about the confrontation of civilization with the natural man. Similarly, Adam Smith was duly impressed by the fact that a small number of Englishmen in the East India Company could in his lifetime conquer significant territories in the ancient and fabled land of India. In this sense, then, there’s the question of the Eurocentrism of their experience. They had to address a question we don’t. That question is: What if the highest potentials of modern society are brought forward before globalization has done its work? What if there is a successful socialist revolution in Europe and North America before capitalism has spread to the rest of the world?

KA: One of Marx and Engels’s great worries is this: What if radical communism or radical democracy, as they sometimes call it, should overtake this small sliver of the modernized, capitalist world only to be smothered very quickly by the rest of the world? He is particularly worried about the power of Russia. We look back and we see England as the predominant power in Marx’s time. But in political terms, Russia was the second most important power in Europe. Do not forget that the 1848 revolutions were defeated in substantial part because Russia was able to send 400,000 troops into the Austro-Hungarian Empire to aid the old regime. So Marx and Engels certainly are concerned with the fact that the modern workers’ movement has emerged only in a small corner of the world. What if it should remain isolated? So on the one hand, they are happy about the spread of modernity, capitalism, and even to a certain extent colonialism, throughout the world, at least in their early writings. On the other hand, as they develop, as Marx moves in the 1850s towards the completion of the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, the critique of capitalism becomes more intense, sharper, deeper, more unremitting. In the *Communist Manifesto*, we have those lines about the progressivism of capitalism. That language persists only in very muted form in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. Over the trajectory of Marx’s writing there is less enthusiasm about progress emerging out of capitalist modernity. And remember that Marx had not lived in England yet when he penned the *Communist Manifesto*. He hadn’t experienced directly a high development of capitalist modernity. Perhaps from the outside he even idealized it. It’s very strange to say this about Marx, but he becomes more critical of capitalism. I have argued that there is a gradual shift, never toward an uncritical third worldism, never toward a primitivist anarchism, but toward harsher critiques of capitalist modernity and a greater appreciation of some of the achievements and contributions of societies at the margins.

SL: Regarding this waning of Marx’s belief in capitalism’s progressive effects the question arises, In what sense did Marx ever think *capitalism* progressive, in the first place? For instance, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx argued that with the coming of capitalism, “all fixed fast-frozen social relations with their venerable

“Anderson” continues on page 4

an obsession among many of the organizers. Without an ongoing articulation of other political goals, growth in and of itself became the key metric of success. Similarly, a naïve faith in the power of social media exaggerates the effect of the movement’s “exposure,” as if politics is simply a matter of “getting out the message” to enough people. In spite of its many merits, the indignados also need to be considered in terms of the potential limitations of a populist social movement that is reluctant to articulate any long-term political goals. While in some ways the anti-globalization movement has been more focused—speaking out against this or that trade deal or policy, for instance—it confronted similar problems. Its greatest success was the politicization of many young people, but it has not been able to translate that into a tangible movement with meaningful long-term continuity. Although anti-authoritarian in its ethos, the anti-globalization movement ran up against the limits of protest politics that seek social change primarily through simple appeals to authority.

So, we occupy everywhere...And then what? On some level the OE movement reminds me of the famous call of Peter Finch’s character at the end of *Network*: “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!” As part of its development thus far, the movement now seems to be broaching the question, “Now what?” The New York General Assembly has established solidarity with some unions and it had a functioning popular assembly to make decisions, before things went dormant for the winter. In large part, the future viability of OE will hinge on whether the movement realizes the limits of fetishizing tactics and simply registering discontent while eschewing conflict and creativity. I see all the different local conditions in all the different places that OE has spread as the true source of counter-power. Taking a square without organizing your workplace and community seems to take the focus away from sources of real of counter-power and place an emphasis on temporary occupations.

While I am still wondering where this movement is going and what is truly being said and communicated, I do recognize that there have been amazing things happening across North America. The formation of general assemblies in so many cities is extraordinary. The OE movement has rendered visible a generalized discontent, but the real upshot of the last six months may simply be that OE has brought forth one question: What are we going to do about it? | **P**

1. See the interview with David Graeber in *Platypus Review* 43 (February 2012), as well as the interview with Slavoj Žižek in *Platypus Review* 42 (December 2011–January 2012).
2. All of this was demonstrated at the Occupy Toronto meeting, an account of which can be found online at <http://megantron.blogspot.com/2011/10/no-consensus-on-occupy-toronto.html>.
3. Jessica Yee’s article on the Racialicious blog does a great job breaking down the issues of colonialism and capitalism with respect to OE. It is available online at <http://www.racialicious.com/2011/09/30/occupy-wall-street-the-game-of-colonialism-and-further-nationalism-to-be-decolonized-from-the-left/>.
4. See Hedges’s interview at <http://www.rawstory.com/rawreplay/2011/09/chris-hedges-occupy-wall-street-is-where-the-hope-of-america-lies/>.